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PERIODIC REPORT ON EVALUATION

Report of the Executive Director

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted to the Executive Board in response to Governing Council decisions 92/30 and 90/35A, which requested the Executive Director to report biennially on evaluation activities.

2. Following the introduction, section II of the present report provides details on evaluation and evaluative activities[1] undertaken within UNFPA during the biennium 2004-2005. These activities include both independent evaluations as well as activities related to the implementation of results-based management. Section III of the report addresses a key accountability issue pertaining to whether UNFPA evaluations provide reasonable assurance that the Fund's evaluation work is reliable and relevant, and that interventions are achieving their intended results. Focusing on key findings from evaluations conducted during 2004-2005, section IV highlights in particular how select evaluation results are being used to support organizational learning and improve UNFPA programming in key priority areas, namely: gender mainstreaming; reproductive health; emergency and humanitarian assistance; and population and development. Section V of the report presents conclusions and future directions. Section VI contains elements for a decision.

II. EVALUATION ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED DURING 2004-2005

Overview

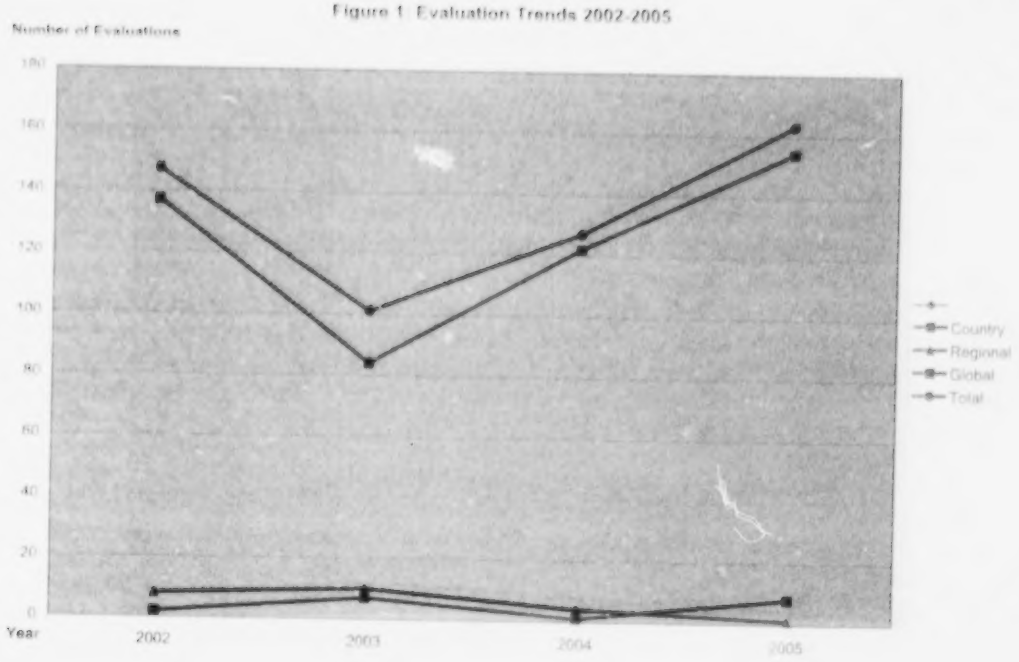
3. During the period 2002–2005[2], UNFPA conducted 497 country level evaluations, 23 regional and 18 global evaluations. Figure 1 illustrates the trend in the number of country, regional and global evaluations during this period. The figure shows a variable but rising trend. Variations occur from year to year because the number of evaluations conducted depends on the stage of the programme and project cycles. Typically, midterm evaluations are conducted in the third year of the country programme cycle and final evaluations in the fifth year of the cycle. Most of the evaluations were conducted by national experts (in 2005, for example, 86 per cent of all evaluators engaged in country level evaluations were national experts) either solely or together with international evaluators or Country Technical Services Team (CST) advisers. Three out of eight global evaluations conducted during 2004-2005 were undertaken jointly with other United Nations agencies.

4. Overall, monitoring and evaluation are becoming more participatory. Almost all country offices involve national counterparts in planning, monitoring and evaluation activities. Almost two thirds of the country offices also involve donors in these activities, including those donors that are present in the country, but not directly funding UNFPA programmes. The number of country level evaluations conducted jointly with government counterparts, donors and United Nations agencies increased during the period 2002–2005 from seven in 2002 to 39 in 2005.

[1] These activities are quite distinct from evaluation and provide baseline data to effectively monitor and evaluate programme design, implementation and impact.

[2] While the present report focuses on the period 2004-2005, in order to illustrate trends, data from the period 2002-2003 has also been taken into consideration, as appropriate.

Figure 1. Evaluation Trends 2002-2005

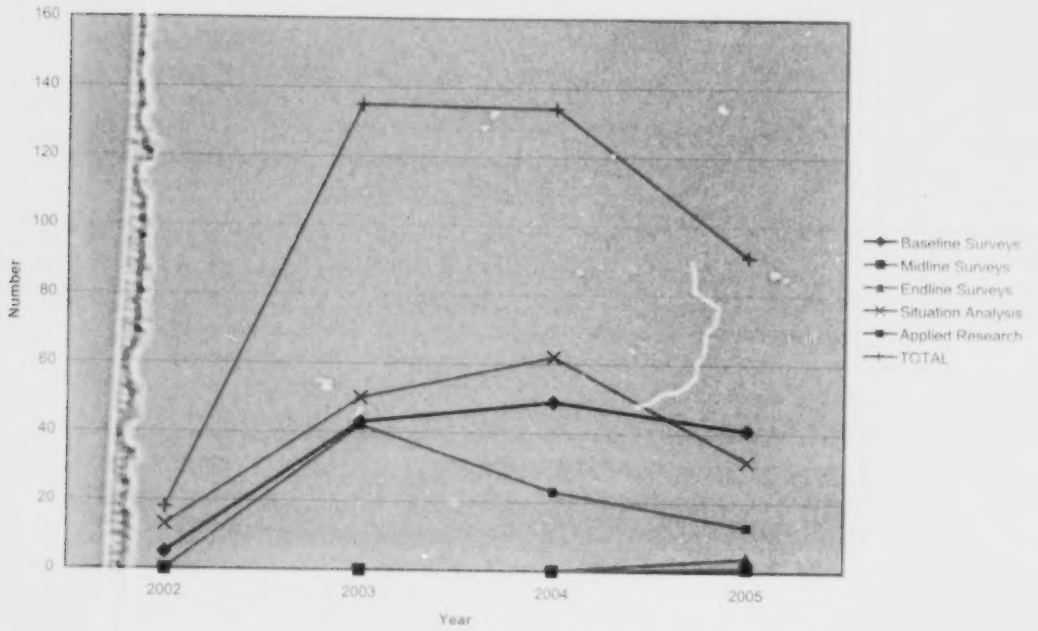


5. Compliance with UNFPA evaluation guidelines for countries ending their country programmes was 90 per cent in 2002–2003 and 73 per cent in 2004–2005. The difference may be explained by the fact that in 2004, UNFPA introduced new guidelines for country programme evaluation mandating the evaluation of programme outcomes and all pilot and demonstration projects at the end of the programme cycle. This replaced the former comprehensive country programme evaluation. Country offices are in the process of making the transition to meet the new requirements.

6. In addition to evaluations, a number of evaluative activities such as baseline surveys, situation analyses and applied research are organized by UNFPA country offices to enable results-based programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. Figure 2 provides an overview of country level evaluative activities conducted during the period 2002–2005.

7. During the period 2004-2005, UNFPA country offices conducted 225 evaluative activities compared to 153 during 2002-2003. The increase in the number of baseline surveys, situation analyses and applied research conducted during the period 2002-2004 is explained by the fact that 41 per cent of UNFPA country programmes were at the beginning of their five-year cycle. It should be noted that in 2005, four countries conducted endline surveys and one conducted a midline survey in order to analyse the outcomes and impact of country programme interventions. In spite of the progress made, the availability of baseline data is still unsatisfactory. While midline surveys are optional and therefore not frequently available, endline surveys are increasingly being conducted as results-based country programmes that had carried out baseline surveys now draw to an end.

Figure 2: UNFPA Country Level Evaluative Activities 2002-2005



Evaluative activities relevant to tracking strategic goals

Country level

8. Strengthening results-based management is currently one of the main strategies for UNFPA to track its goals and to answer the question whether its assistance achieves the expected results, has a positive impact and uses the right strategies. Annually, UNFPA conducts a desk review of the self-reported data from the annual Fund-wide reports to assess progress in strengthening results-based management systems. To facilitate reporting, UNFPA has established the Impact-Track Remote Data Entry Facility for online completion of the country office annual reports. To expedite reporting and reduce workload, the reporting format was streamlined and simplified in 2005.

9. Overall, the evidence from the field indicates that countries are making progress in the use of strategic planning tools and application of the logical framework (logframe) and its indicators for designing and managing the programmes. About 60 per cent of the country offices are using problem tree and causality analysis planning tools; and 75 per cent are using stakeholder analyses. However, developing clear, realistic results statements, defining indicators to measure results, and establishing baseline data against which to measure progress remain a challenge.

10. An increasing number of country offices are establishing monitoring and evaluation systems. Countries like China, India, Philippines, Senegal, Viet Nam and Uganda have strong results-based

monitoring and evaluation systems. It has become a common practice to include indicator and strategy analysis in annual country programme reviews. In 2005, the proportion of country offices undertaking at least 75 per cent of the field visit monitoring plan was 69 per cent compared to 61 per cent in 2004. During 2004–2005, almost 90 per cent of the country offices conducted midyear and/or annual reviews of office management plans. Country offices are designating monitoring and evaluation focal points specifically charged with strengthening the national and internal monitoring and evaluation culture: in 2005, 65 countries had monitoring and evaluation focal points; nine countries had monitoring and evaluation officers; four countries had monitoring and evaluation units; and 18 countries had monitoring and evaluation working groups/task forces.

11. Supporting results-based management capacity is one of the main strategies employed by UNFPA to monitor the results of UNFPA assistance and country offices and CSTs are instrumental in this process. For example, in the reporting period, the CST in Bangkok was involved in the training of National Committees of Parliamentarians for Population and Development in monitoring and evaluation of advocacy interventions. In Lebanon, UNFPA trained national counterparts in the use of monitoring and evaluation tools. In Honduras, as a member of the National AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, UNFPA provided technical support. In Armenia, UNFPA has contributed to development of the indicators' framework for the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP). In Kyrgyzstan and Panama, UNFPA supported capacity development for national data collection and provided technical guidance on monitoring and evaluation tools.

12. In Pakistan, UNFPA built the capacity of the district managers of health departments in the use of information for decision-making, by imparting comprehensive training and providing monitoring tools. UNFPA also provided technical assistance for designing a software package to enter the service delivery record. A Geographic Information System (GIS) has been developed to map out the service delivery points in the focus districts to minimize duplication of activities and to provide managers with a planning tool. In Timor-Leste, UNFPA worked with the Ministry of Health to develop a standardized national reporting system on major reproductive health issues. In Turkey, UNFPA provided technical and financial support to establish a databank for population and development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Tonga, UNFPA supported the development of a comprehensive framework of indicators for programme monitoring and evaluation, which will facilitate data collection. In Zimbabwe, UNFPA contributed to the development of ZIMDAT, the Zimbabwe Statistics Database.

13. In many countries, as an active and effective partner in sector-wide approaches (SWAps), UNFPA plays an increased technical advisory role in monitoring and evaluation and participates in developing the joint monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Intercountry programme

14. Major efforts were undertaken during 2004–2005 to strengthen the results-based management of the new UNFPA intercountry programme (2004–2007). The intercountry programme guidelines, issued in 2004, introduced new monitoring and evaluation requirements and mechanisms to ensure the shared focus of the intercountry programme projects; integration between regional and interregional programmes and country level programmes; coherence and conformity of the expected results of the individual projects with the intercountry programme outputs; and adequate tracking of the progress and the results. In 2005, to further strengthen the coordinated planning, monitoring and evaluation of the intercountry programme four thematic groups were formed around specific multi-year funding framework (MYFF)

outcomes and were tasked to ensure that projects were mutually supportive, logically sequenced in time, and jointly led towards quantified outputs that were relevant at the country level. The first annual review of the intercountry programme took place in April 2005. It underscored the importance of strengthening the integration between regional and interregional programmes and country level interventions. To address this issue, the review recommended that indicators be developed for the intercountry programme as a whole, and that UNFPA and its partners take these indicators as a starting point for determining project-level indicators. The review also recommended that quality monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be an integral part of any project to be approved.

Headquarters

15. To support strengthening results-based management capacity in the field, UNFPA conducted five successful regional dialogues on results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation with CSTs and country office programme staff. According to pre- and post-dialogue evaluations, the regional dialogues resulted in an increase in participants' knowledge, skills and support for results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation. The dialogues have provided UNFPA with an overview of critical issues that need to be addressed. These include: assigning human resources specialized in monitoring and evaluation to UNFPA regional- and country-level operations; strengthening internal programme monitoring and evaluation systems; and improving the quality of evaluations in line with international standards. Based on the dialogue experience, UNFPA produced a set of learning tools for results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation with a human-rights based approach. UNFPA also approved a two-year programme quality assurance action plan with a focus on improvements of results-based management at headquarters.

16. To provide essential guidance on results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation to UNFPA programme and technical staff and national counterparts, the Programme Manager's Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit has been updated. The toolkit is used by both UNFPA and national counterparts. In its efforts to share effective monitoring and evaluation approaches and audit practices and promote organizational learning, UNFPA expanded and updated its intranet site and maintained the UNFPA Evaluation Network.

17. An external evaluation of the Fund's Technical Advisory Programme (TAP), which includes the CSTs and the strategic partnership programme, was conducted in 2005 and found that the TAP plays an important role and should be extended for a two-year period, 2006-2007. The evaluation concluded that: (a) the TAP provides UNFPA with a coherent system with which to deliver technical support to countries; (b) the TAP has increased the accessibility and use of technical information and is a cost-effective way of supporting capacity-building at country, regional and subregional levels; and (c) the TAP has been instrumental in supporting country office implementation of United Nations reform processes. The evaluation noted that the implementation of the TAP required some adjustments to ensure that the programme remains effective and responsive to country needs in a changing environment.

Inter-agency collaboration

18. UNFPA continues to contribute to inter-agency collaboration at headquarters, regional and country levels. UNFPA has participated in the work of the United Nations Simplification and Harmonization Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, in the development of three harmonized monitoring and evaluation tools -- the Annual Work Plan Monitoring Tool, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Annual Review, and the UNDAF Evaluation Guidance --

that were integrated into the United Nations Common Country Assessment (CCA)/UNDAF guidelines and UNFPA monitoring and evaluation policies and procedures.

19. UNFPA also continues to participate in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and is actively engaged in professional discussions on evaluation matters with counterparts in other United Nations organizations. During the reporting period, UNFPA contributed to and benefited from several UNEG initiatives, including the survey on Evaluation Norms and Standards. The survey provided an opportunity for UNFPA to conduct a self-assessment of the organization's compliance with the United Nations Norms and Standards for Evaluation issued in 2005. UNFPA contributed extensively to the UNEG preparatory study on issues and options for United Nations agencies to conduct a series of joint country-level evaluations.

20. UNFPA is an active member of the UNAIDS Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Group (MERG) and the Co-sponsors Evaluation Working Group (CEWG). As a member of CEWG, UNFPA participated in the development of the Performance Monitoring Matrix for the 2006–2007 Unified Budget and Workplan.

III. THE QUALITY OF UNFPA EVALUATION WORK: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2005 META-EVALUATION

21. This section of the present report considers whether the Fund's decentralized evaluations meet recognized quality standards and help to support and inform implementation of organizational goals and priorities. It also asks whether these same evaluations provide reasonable assurance that UNFPA activities are not only relevant but also successfully achieving their intended results.

22. To address these issues, in 2005 UNFPA commissioned an evaluation quality assessment (EQA), the first systematic meta-type assessment of evaluation quality ever undertaken within UNFPA. The assessment built on similar exercises undertaken in other agencies and evaluation fora. The evaluation covered a three-year period (2002-2004) and sampled 60 decentralized evaluation reports. The assessment benefited from an inter-departmental reference group that provided guidance to the evaluation team, especially regarding methodological approach and recommendation formulation.

23. A detailed assessment matrix was developed. The matrix includes 28 assessment points based upon recognized international evaluation quality standards, including utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy. Judgements were also made regarding the relevance of analytical content for assisting with current organizational priorities as outlined in the UNFPA 2002 Strategic Direction Positioning Statement. Those evaluations, which were found to be of the highest quality during the desk assessment phase were subsequently extended into "best practice" case studies involving follow-up field visits by the meta-evaluators. A major aim of these visits was to assess success factors and evaluation impact, including cost/benefit ratios.

24. The meta-evaluation assessed how well UNFPA evaluations met the minimal requirements of UNFPA evaluation policy delineated in the Fund's Policy and Procedures Manual. In that regard, a key finding was that 49 per cent of the resulting ratings were satisfactory or better. These results are similar to the findings of the same type of exercises undertaken by other United Nations agencies such as UNICEF. Relevant assessment points in this context included the quality of analytic content in relation to the five standard criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

25. Use of the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria was found to be one of the strengths of the evaluations. Overall, 57 per cent of the evaluations were rated as satisfactory or better on two or more of the five criteria. Analysis of efficiency, however, was found to be the most challenging with close to 60 per cent of reports not addressing the issue.

26. On one key point, relevance, the EQA looked specifically at how well each evaluation assessed:

- whether the design of the intervention was in line with national needs, and national policies and priorities as well as those of the target group;
- whether the intervention was in line with UNFPA policies and priorities, especially the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD);
- whether synergies and complementarities existed between UNFPA intervention and those of other development partners;
- whether intervention results were relevant to stakeholder needs.

Sixty-three per cent of the UNFPA evaluations examined were rated satisfactory or better suggesting that UNFPA evaluations did assess the relevance of UNFPA activities. Only 3 per cent of evaluations provided no assessment of the relevance of UNFPA activities, while 34 per cent of the evaluations examined provided an inadequate assessment. The EQA also assessed the quality of lesson identification and found that 65 per cent of evaluations received satisfactory or better ratings.

27. UNFPA evaluations also succeeded in making evidence-based recommendations (78 per cent rated satisfactory or better). A constraining factor for promoting better evaluation use and impact was that 88 per cent of the evaluations did not provide a clear indication of intended use. Within the EQA best practice studies, there had been extensive follow-up to recommendations, especially when the evaluator had adopted a participatory approach. Five out of seven of the best quality evaluations within the case studies were also found to have positive cost/benefit ratios, i.e., the savings in programming were higher than the cost of evaluation.

28. The EQA also examined evaluation relevance for supporting and informing implementation of current organizational programmatic goals and priorities, especially as formulated in the 2002 Strategic Direction Positioning Statement. For this purpose, six good practice indicators were developed. Evidence was examined as to how well evaluations: (a) assessed UNFPA contribution to national capacity development; (b) enabled UNFPA to engage in evidence-based policy dialogue; (c) addressed cultural issues; (d) assessed national ownership effects of the intervention; (e) assessed partnership and alliance building strategies; and (f) provided an assessment of progress towards results-based management. These indicators were developed in relation to the main strategies identified in the current MYFF, 2004-2007.

29. The EQA analysis found that UNFPA activities make a strong contribution to national capacity development and national ownership. Half of the reports received satisfactory or better ratings on these two assessment points. The analysis of certain programmatic issues was found to be more limited (e.g., results-based management, cultural issues, building the evidence base for policy dialogue and examining partnership and alliance-building effects). The EQA included an assessment of how well decentralized evaluations assessed the results of UNFPA activities. The two most relevant evaluation criteria included in this context were the quality of the assessments of effectiveness and impact of the UNFPA interventions.

30. The best practice case studies helped provide further insights into contextual factors associated with effective evaluation practice. Some key findings in this context included the following:

- Terms of reference that clearly define evaluation purpose, use and users, methodology, objectives and process are one key element leading to higher quality evaluations.
- Programme design that plans for evaluation, for example, by including baseline and endline surveys, and ongoing monitoring and self-assessment systems, facilitates high quality evaluation results.
- High quality evaluation results depend upon country offices being well networked with high quality national evaluators. Mixed teams of national and international evaluators appear to be an optimal combination for achieving high quality evaluation results.
- Greater exposure to participatory evaluation techniques would be beneficial for UNFPA staff.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS RELEVANT TO UNFPA STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Gender

31. Evaluation findings related to gender equality and the empowerment of women showed important achievements and also identified challenges. UNFPA accords the highest priority to gender and is engaged in diverse activities to support gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women. Several successes are noted at the policy level. Among these is the programme for strengthening the implementation of innovative and culturally sensitive integrated community-based reproductive health service delivery in the Upper East region of Ghana, and the Latin American regional programme on following up and monitoring ICPD through civil society organizations. At the policy level, the latter revealed successes in developing gender-sensitive databases to track national performance. Gender mainstreaming in information, education and communication (IEC) materials, and promoting male participation were two areas that proved to be challenging.

32. Numerous publications, papers, guidelines and training materials produced by UNFPA reflect the important recognition of gender equality and the empowerment of women as being essential to achieving reproductive health and sustainable development. Despite the growing number and variety of printed materials, there is a need for UNFPA staff to have greater clarity and practical guidance on gender mainstreaming in programming using a human rights and a culturally sensitive approach. To address this need, an appreciative assessment "Focusing on gender: an assessment of gender integration in UNFPA materials produced between 1997 and early 2005" examined the quality, packaging and design of gender-related messages being communicated to UNFPA staff as well as the utility and utilization of these materials. It also identified good practices in communicating gender concepts and their mainstreaming into all UNFPA materials. The assessment promoted a common understanding of what should be done at the organizational level to institutionalize strengths and achievements in current practice. The assessment used the appreciative approach, which is a participative, collaborative approach to evaluative activities involving stakeholders and seeking first of all to identify what works well and what leads to good practices with the ultimate aim of strengthening learning and organizational development.

33. The assessment concluded that during the period under review UNFPA produced many high-quality documents addressing gender as a cross-cutting factor, as well as a wide range of materials for staff to ensure the mainstreaming of gender in programmes and projects. Over time, UNFPA has refined its approach to gender mainstreaming, including the wider utilization of a culturally sensitive and rights-

based approach. This progress constitutes a potentially important contribution to meeting gender-related objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action and the MYFF. It is also conducive to achieving the MDGs and addresses the challenge of implementing human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that are directly relevant to achieving gender equality through the empowerment of women.

34. The desk review revealed a number of challenges: progress in mainstreaming gender in UNFPA materials was uneven; the quality standards established for this assessment were not uniformly met in the publications; gender-sensitive language was not always used consistently; and gender analysis was not integrated into all types of publications and quality varied. The desk review noted that sometimes the target audience was unclear, thus limiting the assessment of the relevance of gender messages. It was noted that utility and utilization of the materials could be increased through: (a) additional operational guidance on how to mainstream gender; and (b) increased availability of publications, including in languages other than English.

35. Reducing gender-based violence, one of the most severe manifestations of gender inequity, is a key strategic goal of UNFPA. An evaluation of the UNFPA-supported pilot projects for addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in reproductive health clinics, which involved piloting a programme guide to GBV, highlighted the programme guide's contribution to the treatment of GBV as a public health priority, and demonstrated the feasibility and urgency of addressing non-health factors to improve women's reproductive health and guarantee their health rights. The programme guide provided UNFPA with an effective strategy to address GBV in clinic settings.

Reproductive health

36. Evaluation findings related to reproductive health revealed the positive results of policy advocacy for reproductive health. The main factors in successful policy dialogue were: establishing buy-in from key political figures, which requires developing a relationship with policymakers over time and ensuring resources are available to follow through with policies; integrated planning; and integrating UNFPA support into government programmes and infrastructure. The midterm review of the Viet Nam country programme found that the political support of policy makers from the central to local levels for the improvement of reproductive health care quality increased considerably. According to the evaluation of the programme on "Access to IEC and basic reproductive health services for adolescents" in Nicaragua, success resulted from the programme's being mainstreamed into both national and municipality level plans and policies.

37. Evaluations of reproductive health interventions focusing on adolescents showed that finding appropriate service delivery models to reach adolescents, particularly unmarried and/or rural adolescents, continues to be a challenge worldwide. More support for monitoring and evaluation of these service models is needed to identify the ones with highest impact and least cost since high-cost models will not be sustainable in most developing countries. A number of lessons can be distilled from the evaluations concerning how to work with communities, including adolescents, in order to improve sexual and reproductive health. Among these lessons are the following: the need to develop advocacy techniques tailored to specific audiences and contexts; the need to engage with teachers and parents; the use of peer educators; the use of interactive and participatory learning techniques; and a focus on the workplace.

38. Measuring the impact and relevance of UNFPA assistance and the progress towards global and national goals remains a challenge which the Fund is addressing, inter alia, by increasing the number of

impact evaluations. For example, a comprehensive impact evaluation of the African Youth Alliance (AYA) programme – an innovative multisectoral reproductive health/HIV-prevention programme implemented in Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania – is in process and the final evaluation findings will become available in the last quarter of 2006. Availability of baseline and endline data is key for UNFPA to track the impact of its interventions. The endline survey conducted in Viet Nam found noticeable impact of UNFPA-funded reproductive health interventions. The survey showed, inter alia, that in the mountainous northern province of Ha Giang the proportion of deliveries assisted by trained health staff increased from 42.9 per cent to 57 per cent and the proportion of women having at least three antenatal care visits increased from 36 per cent to 66 per cent.

39. Reducing maternal mortality and morbidity is an essential commitment of UNFPA and a strategic priority. The final external evaluation of the programme Averting Maternal Death and Disability (AMDD) is in progress. The programme aimed to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity by focusing on critical emergency obstetric care interventions in low resource environments. The evaluation will examine what worked and what did not, including whether the UNFPA-supported AMDD project areas progressed better than other areas in terms of maternal health and delivery complications, and if so at what cost. The evaluation consists of endline needs assessments in the target areas using the same methods as the baseline needs assessments in order to assess impact of interventions. The evaluation will also compare the findings in the provinces where specific emergency obstetric care interventions have been implemented, with the provinces where the regular national programme has been implemented without a particular focus on emergency obstetric care.

Emergency and humanitarian assistance

40. Integration of reproductive health and rights into relief operations and emergency preparedness programmes is an important strategy of UNFPA. A wide range of evaluation activities conducted in 2004-2005 in this area generated many important lessons which are being used to refine UNFPA strategies and identify practical steps to systematize and scale up the UNFPA response to crisis, transition, recovery and prevention, as well as more efficient ways to meet the basic standards for reproductive health response in emergencies. Below are some highlights of the most important evaluations conducted in 2004–2005 that relate to UNFPA humanitarian assistance.

41. As a core member of the Inter-agency Working Group (IAWG) on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations, UNFPA conducted a global evaluation on progress made in providing reproductive health services to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the 10 years since the ICPD. Based on its findings, UNFPA has stepped up its training of partners in humanitarian assistance work on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), gender-based violence and reproductive health. The evaluation has informed the current round of revisions of the reproductive health kits for crisis situations.

42. In 2005, UNFPA conducted the highly participatory evaluation of a UNFPA project focusing on internally displaced adolescents. The findings of the evaluation will be utilized to institutionalize gender and reproductive health concerns into humanitarian response and to expand services for adolescents.

43. In 2004, UNFPA, in collaboration with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, conducted a region-specific assessment of the MISP, which indicated that: (a) reproductive health services were not sufficiently available in eastern Chad refugee camps, particularly for pregnant women and rape survivors; and (b) condoms were not available to prevent pregnancy and HIV transmission.

44. During 2004–2005, UNFPA commissioned Columbia University to undertake several evaluations. An evaluation of existing HIV/AIDS and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) programming in Liberia assessed the levels of community response, available resources and gaps in programming. Recommendations for both immediate and long-term action are provided in the resulting report entitled "Roadmap to Recovery: Mapping HIV/AIDS and SGBV Programming Needs in Liberia".

45. In Sierra Leone, a rapid assessment of the Fund's comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention programming was conducted with the objective of identifying programming gaps and weaknesses so as to advise UNFPA on possible methods to improve programmes for women in crises, ex-combatants and uniformed personnel. The UNFPA country office in Sierra Leone continues to work with various partners to address the identified gaps and to implement the proposed recommendations.

46. The inter-agency real-time evaluation of humanitarian operations in Darfur, Sudan, completed in 2005, produced 21 proposals for improvement, which fall under seven specific categories: collective accountability, planning and coordination, field presence, adopting a collaborative approach to the assistance and protection of IDPs, human rights protection, programming and advocacy.

Population and development

47. Evaluation findings related to population and development revealed the need for further strengthening the focus on individual and institutional capacity development. For example, the evaluation of the Indonesia country programme found that the population and development component had contributed to increased knowledge and understanding about population and gender issues among policy makers, law makers and programme planners. However, there had been a lack of emphasis on mainstreaming interventions into government planning processes. At the same time, positive results pertaining to population and development were found in the evaluations from several other countries, including Botswana, Burkina Faso, the Maldives and Myanmar.

48. For a number of years, UNFPA has been supporting the International Institute on Ageing (INIA) training programme. In 2005, UNFPA commissioned a tracer study of trainees of INIA in order to explore the use of training received by participants in their respective countries and to fine tune the Fund's own strategic direction in the area of population ageing. The tracer study report provided good recommendations, particularly with regard to increasing national capacity to address the needs of older persons and facilitating the development of networks among participants.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

49. There is clear evidence that a number of high quality evaluations are being carried out within UNFPA and that many of these have resulted in extensive follow-up to recommendations. There is also consistent support across UNFPA for building a stronger evaluation function and culture.

50. Evaluation activities in UNFPA, as a part of the risk management process, intend to serve the dual function of contributing to the improvement of policies and programming, and assessing the effectiveness and impact of the Fund's performance. To ensure that evaluation activities respond better to these tasks and contribute to the enhancement of the culture of risk management the following steps and changes are being undertaken.

51. As noted in the report on internal audit and oversight (DP/FPA/2006/4), UNFPA has re-engineered its oversight programme to incorporate programme and evaluation activities in a more elaborate way and to embed them in the risk model. Auditors and evaluators work as a team to provide independent assurance to management and governing bodies on how the Fund is managing risk and achieving impact. They also act as catalysts for improvements.

52. As a matter of priority, UNFPA continues enhancing the quality, utility and relevance of its evaluation work to ensure that it meets the criteria embedded in all existing standards like those of UNEG or other professional associations. The organization is developing a policy document with quality standards and criteria, which will help guide all future UNFPA evaluation activity and ensure better quality of evaluation results.

53. Measuring the impact of UNFPA activities remains an important challenge to be met by the forthcoming medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2008–2011. There needs to be an increase in the number of evaluations focusing on strategic issues and building evidence of the impact of UNFPA assistance at the country level, and globally. This type of evaluation should form an important part of the Fund's results-based management system to assess UNFPA contribution to broader development results and outcomes. In this connection, UNFPA plans to accommodate two requirements mentioned earlier in DP/FPA/2005/7 (Part I): on the one hand, the organization needs to harmonize its strategies and their outputs to aggregate results for the evaluation of global impact; and on the other, it must evaluate innovative programme strategies and models to maintain its leading edge expertise. UNFPA will pay close attention to these issues in the preparation of the 2008–2011 MTSP, as well as in the conceptualization and design of innovative programme interventions.

54. Measuring impact and managing risks are two increasing demands on the evaluation and audit functions in UNFPA. As indicated in DP/FPA/2006/4, the revision of the oversight programme to encompass the dimensions of operational, external, and process risks is the first step to build synergies between the two functions. Quality assurance of evaluation, support to capacity-building in evaluation, thematic cross-cutting evaluations, and measurement of strategic impact are the cardinal evaluation functions that UNFPA undertakes in measuring effectiveness. When harmoniously articulated with the audit process, they will contribute to UNFPA efforts to better manage risk, and to be more competitive.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

55. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present periodic report on evaluation (DP/FPA/2006/5).